



**TESTIMONY ON MICHIGAN SB 423/424**  
**Presented by Vicki Deisner, Midwest Legislative Director**  
**Before the Michigan Senate Agriculture Committee**  
**Thursday, June 14, 2012**

On behalf of our approximately 2 million members and supports, including over 60,000 Michigan citizens, I want to thank you for the opportunity to testify before this committee. My name is Vicki Deisner and while I am not new to the Midwest, I recently became a member of the Government Relations effort for the ASPCA. I look forward to working with you on this and other issues.

Founded in 1866, the ASPCA is the first humane organization established in the Americas and serves as the nation's leading voice for animal welfare. We have a very large grants program and thus far this year, we have already awarded over \$77,600 to 10 Michigan communities; last year we provided over \$150,000 to 10 Michigan communities.

The ASPCA's mission is to provide effective means for the prevention of cruelty to animals throughout the United States, and for that reason we ask this committee to pass SB 423 and 424, "Grant's Bills", that would assure the state of Michigan provides the most humane death possible for animals when euthanasia is necessary.

SB 423 and 424, known as "Grants Bills", are named for a friendly dog that unfortunately, like so many other companion animals, died in a Michigan animal control shelter's gas chamber. "Grant's Bills" would require the use of injection for euthanasia in Michigan animal shelters and by Class B dealers in the state. Direct injection of the drug sodium pentobarbital (referred to as EBI for euthanasia by injection) is accepted by all national veterinary and humane organizations as the most humane method currently available for euthanasia. When performed properly by trained personnel, EBI is painless to the animal and takes effect within seconds. The use of other methods of causing death besides EBI, such as the use of gas chambers which can take over 25 minutes to kill an animal, is unacceptable in any setting where proper euthanasia drugs can be legally obtained. Proper euthanasia drugs can be legally obtained **by authorities** in Michigan.

**Gas chambers are ineffective and inefficient.** The gas chamber cannot be humanely used for the majority of shelter pets that require euthanasia. Old, sick and injured animals have circulatory problems that delay the effects of carbon monoxide, causing them to experience significant distress prior to losing consciousness. Likewise, young animals have physiological make-ups that render a humane death impossible. And when animals are pregnant, the mother typically dies well before the unborn puppies, causing them to suffocate to death. The 25 or more minutes it can take to end that animal's life is agonizing.

**Gas chambers pose a danger to shelter staff.** Carbon monoxide is a hazardous substance that is highly toxic with no odor, color or taste. It is one of the leading causes of accidental poisoning in the United States. Repeated exposure to carbon monoxide, even at low levels, can result in long-term effects including impaired memory, breathing difficulties, muscle weakness, heart irregularity, and brain damage. In addition, animals that are handled when put into a small, dark, confining gas chamber may become fearful and react more adversely than animals who are being gently restrained during EBI – thus increasing the danger for shelter staff. Shelter workers have been injured and even killed by malfunctioning gas chambers – in 2000 a Tennessee shelter worker was killed due to carbon monoxide exposure while in the process of euthanizing an animal.

**Gas chambers are more expensive.** A 2009 study has proven that death by injection, including the costs of permitting and acquiring euthanasia drugs, actually costs less than using a gas chamber.

**Training for injection is readily available.** All of the four Michigan shelters that are still using gas chambers already have an EBI back-up system and/or are trained in EBI procedures. Michigan law permits shelter technicians to



directly administer euthanasia drugs without supervision by a veterinarian, and a majority of shelters are licensed to receive EBI drugs directly. Grants and training are available to help Michigan shelters with the transition to injection.

**State action is needed.** Statewide regulation is needed to ensure all Michigan shelter pets, and those who are procured by Class B dealers (animal brokers), receive the same humane treatment if euthanasia is **absolutely** necessary.

For all of these reasons, I respectfully urge this committee to support SB 423 and 424, and end the cruel practice of putting pets to death in gas chambers. Thank you for your time and consideration.